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Supporting Differentiated Instruction: A Professional Learning Communities Approach

By Robin J. Fogarty and Brian M. Pete

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Supporting Differentiated Instruction: A Professional Learning Communities Approach* by Robin J. Fogarty and Brian M. Pete. *Supporting Differentiated Instruction* addresses the power of combining professional learning communities (PLC) work with differentiated instruction in order to better support teachers and better reach students.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or by an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps to promote differentiated instruction within a PLC.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Chapter 1

All About Collaboration

1. What are the guiding principles of a PLC? Does your school practice these principles?
What has been the result?
2. What are the various options for forming a PLC team? Does your school or district already have such teams in place? Which type of team do you think you are best suited to?
3. Do you participate in collegial conversations on a regular basis? How could these discussions lead to more effective, purposeful differentiation?
4. What is the relationship between PLCs and differentiated instruction? Can your school or district focus on both being a strong PLC and differentiating instruction? What difficulties do you anticipate? What opportunities do you anticipate?

Chapter 2

All About Differentiation

1. What does brain research say about differentiation? Describe any instances where you've seen evidence of the twelve critical points in your own work with students.
2. List the three steps of Fullan's theory of change. Which stage is your school or district at in regard to differentiating instruction? How do you know?
3. How is *differentiation* defined differently by researchers and practitioners? Write out your definition of differentiation.
4. What are the three elements of differentiated learning? Which of these elements are at work in your classroom or school?
5. Why are data so important to differentiation? How can common assessments help PLC teams differentiate? Describe any experiences you've had with common assessments.

Chapter 3

All About the Learners

1. Why should teachers get to know their students' back stories? What do the authors consider baseline data?
2. What four ways help teachers gauge student readiness? Describe how you use or would like to use these measures in your own classroom or school.
3. How can informal conversations help teachers learn students' interests? Do you ever interact with students outside of the structured classroom environment? If so, where, and what have you learned?
4. Describe the two theories of intelligence. Brainstorm ways you can incorporate activities for several of these intelligences in a single unit.
5. What is *student affect*? How might awareness of student affect help you understand your students better?

Chapter 4

Changing the Content

1. How can teachers maintain the required student learning standards and simultaneously change the content to meet student needs? How does changing the content help this equation?
2. List the three ways of changing content. Which of these techniques do you already use or plan to use?
3. Describe the three tiers of complexity. Which of these tiers is used most in classrooms today? How might that imbalance affect students?
4. In what ways can you change the resources of a lesson? Which resources are you most excited about including as options for students? What do the authors mean by “changing the level of information”?
5. How can you better use your school building and community to help students engage in learning? Where would you enjoy learning if you were a student?

Chapter 5

Changing the Process

1. What are a few direct instruction methods you can use to change the process of learning?
Which of these have you used or do you plan to use?
2. Describe what “revisiting, reviewing, reteaching, and revising” entails. What are the benefits of these techniques?
3. List the five critical elements of the BUILD strategy. How do these elements create a cooperative learning environment?
4. What decisions must a teacher make in regard to cooperative groups? Which of these decisions have you faced in your own work? What did you decide? What was your rationale?
5. What is *student inquiry*? How does this approach differ from direct instruction?
6. How does service learning connect student learning with the real world? What issues or needs does your community have that may give students the opportunity to practice what they’ve learned while simultaneously helping someone?

Chapter 6

Changing the Product

1. List the three approaches to changing the product. Which of these do you already use or plan to use? Which seems the most challenging?
2. How do Gardner's intelligences relate to changing the entry points? Which intelligences do you cater to the most? Does this reflect your own intelligence preferences? What are the implications?
3. What do the authors mean by *exit points*? What exit points do you currently offer your students?
4. What are the differences between summative assessments and formative assessments? What steps can you take to create a balanced assessment plan?

Chapter 7
Diverse-Learner Strategies

1. List the types of learners that the authors discuss in this chapter. Which of these types of learners have you encountered in your work? Was learning differentiated for them?
2. Why do the authors choose to use books as archetypes for discussing different types of learners? How can you plan for different types of learners without designing a separate lesson for each student?
3. What are some characteristics of developing learners you can watch for? How can you change the lesson to help them learn?
4. What challenges might you face with advanced learners? Why might they be underachievers?
5. English learners are a growing demographic in North American schools. How can a teacher reach and teach these students without becoming overwhelmed?
6. Which diagnoses do the authors consider to fall under the special needs umbrella? Which book do the authors use to start a discussion about learners with special needs? Why is this a critical area for differentiation?

Chapter 8

Changing Lessons for Student Success

1. What percentage of students are most lessons designed for? What happens to the rest of the students if there is no differentiation?
2. What typical sections does a lesson design cover in order to engage students and keep them motivated to learn?
3. How might using coding on a lesson template help differentiation efforts? How do you keep track of the types of differentiation you already do in your lessons?
4. Why is it important to use the community of the PLC to brainstorm differentiation ideas and get feedback?

Chapter 9

Changing Units for Student Success

1. How do the authors suggest incorporating change into full units? What unit information should be included in a multimodal curriculum grid of activities?
2. What are *taglines*? How might they help create a sense of ownership for students?
3. What does *VIM N B* stand for? How should a team go about filling in the activity options in the multimodal grid?
4. Why should teams be thinking about assessment options during this stage? How can teams differentiate assessments in a balanced way?

Chapter 10

Next Steps

1. What is the final phase in Fullan and Stiegelbauer’s model of change? How do teams know when they’ve reached this stage?
2. Which of the two types of agendas would work best for your team’s next steps? Do you already have ideas about what to tackle next? Is your team in consensus?
3. Setting new goals and adjusting old ones can be a tumultuous experience. How do you plan to keep discussions structured? Which Action Options from *Supporting Differentiated Instruction* will help you with these discussions?